

WorkFirst Education and Training

June 2005

How are education and training opportunities made available to WorkFirst families?

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges awards block grants to 34 schools and other training providers to deliver educational and job skills training services that meet the needs of WorkFirst parents and other low-income adults in their local communities.

The colleges offer both mainstream educational opportunities and specialized programs, including a new generation of job-focused training programs to meet the needs of the local economy and WorkFirst families.

What are the goals of these services?

- Increase the number of WorkFirst parents entering employment with higher wages than they would otherwise obtain.
- Increase job placements for WorkFirst parents and others with low basic skills or limited English proficiency.
- Increase job placements and wage progression for other employed and low-income parents.

What are some of the specialized training services?

- **Customized Job Skills Training (CJST)** offers employer-driven programs for welfare parents and low-income individuals, providing approximately 12 weeks of training to develop skills in demand by local employers. Colleges have integrated Basic Skills into CJST for adults who need them.
- **Other Basic Skills and Job Skills Training** courses are for adults with specific needs, including limited English, limited basic skills, or missing critical “soft skills.” Training includes skill building to manage the demands of work and family, goal setting, improving English and literacy levels, and developing employment skills.
- **High Wage/High Demand** certificate and degree programs that last up to one year provide even higher wages than CJST and are linked to fields with a shortage of qualified workers.
- **WorkFirst Financial Aid** covers tuition, books, and fees.
- **Wage Progression Services** provide education in the workplace and other job skills training to enable working adults to increase their skill levels and earnings.
- **Work Study** positions offered in conjunction with training give WorkFirst parents real work experience and a better opportunity to secure a job in their chosen field and earn a higher wage.

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- From July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004, more than 11,000 parents were served:
Customized Job Skills: 4,407
Integrated Basic Skills, Adult Basic Education, GED, and job training: 2,898
High Wage/High Demand: 292
Tuition Assistance and Work Study: 3,850
- On average, Customized Job Skills Training completers earned \$1.00 per hour more than WorkFirst parents who did not receive training.
- “Research unequivocally shows that the most successful Welfare-to-Work programs focus on employment but make substantial use of education and training...” – Center for Law and Social Policy

Program Contacts:

Jennifer Thornton, (360) 704-4335
jthornton@sbctc.ctc.edu

Robin Thompson, (360) 704-4327
rthompson@sbctc.ctc.edu

For more information about the WorkFirst program, visit
www.workfirst.wa.gov

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A Better Job,
A Better Life**

